

Nathan Mason House
33 Arnold Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-182

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
82-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

NATHAN MASON HOUSE

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
82-

Address: 33 Arnold Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island . - Plat 16, Lot 309.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Mrs. Dorothy O. Hess

Present Use: Dwelling

Brief Statement
of Significance: This frame house, built in the 1840's, is representa-
tive of the Greek Revival influence on Providence
houses.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1791 Christopher Arnold divides his estate and makes his Will. - Wills Book 7, page 391, in Providence City Hall.
- 1835 Samuel Pearson, executor of the estate of Christopher Arnold sells this property for \$450 to Stephen Martin the highest bidder at public auction.
Bounded: S by Arnold Street 90'; W by Thayer St 69'; N by Robert Burroughs 90'; E by Simeon Barker 71'. - Deed Book 66, page 341, in Providence City
- 1835 Stephen Martin Sells the above property to Nathan Mason for \$500. - Deed Book 66, page 365, in Providence City Hall.
- 1844 There was no house listed here in this location. - Providence Directory.
- 1847 Nathan Mason lived here and until 1853. - Providence Directory.
- 1873 Emeline Mason, widow of Nathan, sells for \$7800 to Captain Philander Crosby "a lot of land with buildings and improvements...it being the home-
stead estate of the late Nathan Mason devised to me in his Will." - Wills book 22, page 307...
Deed Book 242, page 219, in Providence City Hall.

- 1883 WILL Philander Crosby "I give and bequeath to my wife Susan Crosby my Real Estate and all buildings situated on the corner of Arnold and Thayer Streets." Wills Book 29, page 311, in Providence City Hall.
- 1905 George F MacKinnon administrator u/w of Mary S. Crosby, sells for \$4000 to Emily C Fisher a certain lot of land with all buildings and improvements bounded: S by Arnold Street 90'; W by Thayer Street 69'; N by Anna C Howard 90'; E by L E Chapman and James R Butts 71' and is the same premises described in deed to Philander Crosby in 1873. - Deed Book 480, page 122, in Providence City Hall.

This property was taxed to the following persons in the year designated:

- 1906 Emily C Fisher wf William C
1919 Max J Ritcher
1927 Mary A Leonard
1929 John S Leonard
1948 James H Byers 3rd and wf Hazelle
1956 Dorothy O Hess

2. Date of erection: Between 1844 and 1847

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
December 1961.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This house from the 1840's has Greek Revival features typical of Providence including pedimented gables, corner pilasters, Doric frontispiece, and black marble mantels.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Rectangular house facing south, about 50' (south front, seven bays wide) x 32', two stories, plus small two-story bathroom wing on north rear.
2. Foundations: Regular ashlar on south front; fieldstone,

plastered, on rear.

3. Wall construction: Frame, clapboards, paneled corner pilasters.
4. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys: in front and rear walls at west end of house, at northeast side (kitchen) and inside between dining room and bedroom.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doors and doorways: eight-panel, wood main entrance door on south front, third bay from west, side lights; large, wood, doric frontispiece, rusticated pilasters, large simple entablature and cornice. Six-panel rear door.
 - b. Windows, shutters: Six over six light double hung windows, thin muntins, pilaster trim with corner blocks, no shutters. Segmental windows in pediments of gable ends of roof.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, shingle.
 - b. Cornice: Mutule cornice with simple entablature, cornice carried across gable ends to form pediments.
 - c. Dormers: three-gabled dormers on south front.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor planes: Entrance stair hall, six rooms on first floor, two connected parlors on west, dining room adjoining entrance hall on east, kitchen east of dining room, both dining room and kitchen on south front side of house, study and bedroom behind dining room and kitchen on north side. Second floor arrangement similar, with bedrooms.
2. Stairways: Straight run stairway in entrance hall, open string; carved, sunburst, step end ornament; molded hand-rail, turned newel, three slender rectangular baluster per step. May have originally been an open-well stair.
3. Flooring: Wide board floors, 5"-7" widths most areas, up to 14" in parts of second floor.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster throughout, except later

plywood paneling in study. 9'-10" ceilings on first floor.

5. Doorways and doors: Many original doors remain, six-panel, sunk panels, very flat Greek Revival moldings. Double-panel doors on sliding track between two parlors on west side of house. Architraves have shallow, flat, double set-back; corner blocks, plinths.
6. Trim: Window trim matches doorways, paneled under-window aprons, molded chair rail and baseboard. Plaster ceiling cornices and medallions may be later. Beaded board wainscoting in kitchen.
7. Hardware: Some brass hardware on first floor. Porcelain knobs and patterned cast escutcheons on second floor.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Central heating. Fireplaces in many rooms including five with black marble mantels, with plain or carved Ionic pilasters, paneled entablatures and mantel shelves; one fitted with elaborate cast iron grate with full closing face decorated with urns and foliated ornament. Simple, one-story, wood mantels on first floor fireplaces in kitchen and bedroom.

D. Site

Situated at northeast corner of Arnold and Thayer Streets, Arnold Street (on the south) slopes down toward the east, house set on ground leveled by a high retaining wall along the south side, house set close to the sidewalk line on south and west sides, small informal yard on north rear, driveway at east side of lot to garage at northeast corner of lot, residential neighborhood.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
December 1961.